MS 3517

ORAL HISTORY

KATHERINE RODIN

California Historical Society
Women in California Collection

CCOPYRIGHT - 1978

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Oral History of

Katherine Rodin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Literary Property Rights

Interview History

Photographs

Transcript

Index

California Historical Society
Women in California Collection

Interview History

Oral History of KATHERINE (KATE) RODIN

Born: June 14, 1907, in Norwich, Ontario, Canada

now living at 415 Oxford Street, San Francisco, California

Other names: Born Katherine Dell
First marriage to Don McKee (divorced)
Second marriage to Sam Telford (deceased)
Third marriage to John Rodin (deceased)

Interviewer: Lucy Kendall, for the CHS Library, Women in California Collection, under auspices of Manuscript Department, Lynn Bonfield Donovan, Manuscript Librarian.

Time of Interview: Approximately 1½ hours.

Interview conducted: at home of interviewee in San Francisco

General Topic: Her early years, and her activities as secretary to officials of the communist party of the State of California during the early 1930's.

Conduct of the Interview:

Two short interviews were held with Katherine Rodin for inclusion in the series of labor and left wing women of the twenties and thirties.

Arrangements were made for the interview when Rodin was recovering from a severe illness. Unfortunately, her memory was weak. She either did not wish to, or could not, elaborate or flesh out her experiences. Interviewer is certain that the latter is true, as she (Rodin) is a very outgoing and verbal person with a flair for anecdotes.

For the above reason, no effort was made to develop the interview or follow lines of inquiry. Indeed, the interview would not have been conducted at all if it had not been that arrangements had already been made, and it would have been unfair to do nothing at all.

The interviewer, of her own knowledge of the period of the thirties, feels there are certain faulty memories and statements, and recommends any use of this interview material be researchedand authenticated. The interviews were, naturally, unsatisfactory.

Editing

No editing has been done. The transcript is a verbatim copy of the tape. Rodin evinced no interest in the transcript, read it briefly, and made no changes.

Narrative Account of the Interview

Rodin was raised ib a family of Quakers. She had absolutely no political background or radical leanings, nor any contact either at home or away from home with radical individuals or groups. She almost acquired her radicalism by osmosis. Married a man who did have a socialist background, and who later joined the communist party. She followed suit.

Louise Todd Lambert, a former official of the communist party, said of her "...she was a rock of Gibralter..you could always depend on her..she was very even tempered.. a very objective person..very hard worker..consistent.."

This brief story covers her early childhood, her schooling, her marriage, and her leaving Whittier.

She and her husband worked on farms, berry picking, in canneries, and other miscellaneous jobs in Oregon.

Returning to San Francisco they wenton relief.

Then Don, her husband, joined the communist party. Shortly afterward Kate also joined.

The narrative takes up her tenure as an office secretary to officials in the party and her activities during the 1934 West Coast Maritime Strike.

She and her husband separated, and she went to Seattle, Washi gton, where she worked for the International Woodworkers of America. At this time she also worked with the office workers union, and was, in addition, a member of the district committee of the communist party.

The interview was ooncluded as expeditiously as possible, in the hopes that it could be developed at a later date.

At present, Kate is in a convalescent hospital,supposedly recovering from another severe illness. Hopes for her recovery are slim.

Lucy Kendall
February 18, 1978

Katherine Telford Rodin at
World's Fair in San Francisco, 1940

Filed under Telford in Portraits

Kate Telford Rodin - taken in 1939.

Filed under Telford in portrait collection.

ttier, California, 1909

enth grade girls with Mr. Bishop

herine dell Rodin - third from right

Filed under Telford in Portraits

INTERVIEW WITH KATHERINE RODIN - Thursday, April 15, 1976

Q. Let us find out the date of your birth, your maiden name, and your place of birth.
A. I was born June 14, 1907, and my maiden name was Sarah Katherine Dell. The place of birth was Norwich, Ontario, Canada. My parents were mainly of British extraction. My mother was Canadian. My father was British. He was born in England. My father did not come to this country until he was 27 years old.
Q. How did your parents meet?
A. They met because my father was a Quaker minister. He had a Batchelor of Divinity degree.
Q. From where?
A. From the Hartford Theological Seminary.
Q. Was it in America?
A. Yes, Hartford, Connecticut. They met in Canada when he was going around. You see, he was sort of a roving minister. There were certain churches he was supposed to go to ever so often. He met her in Ontario, Canada. I don't know how many visits it took. But they finally got married in Collingwood, Ontario. And he got a pastorate in Norwich, where I was born. When I was ten months old he decided he would rather preach in the United States. So he and I and my mother came to the United States. And it happened to be the year after they (the United States) passed a law that all entrants to this country had to be registered. Well, the Immigration authorities weren't used to the situation yet. We passed the border at night, and we had berths, and nobody came and registered us. So my father had some trouble getting his citizenship on account of this, but he got it. He applied for citizenship and had to go through a lot of rigamarole to getit. And all children, at that point, under legal age, automatically became American citizens when he got his. And he got it finally. And I was listed as a minor child. I and my sister. We were the only two born then. She was born while we were on vacation.
Q. Did your mother get her citizenship too?
A. Yes, that was automatic. She didn't have to apply.
Q. What was the financial status of your parents?
A. My parents didn't have anything except what they got from

meetings and that sort of thing. My father usually had a church, from which he got a pittance.

Q. Where did they come when they came to the United States?

A. They came to several states. I was very young and don't remember too much about this. For about six months we lived in Denver. Then we lived in Nebraska. Then we lived in Iowa. Then we lived for six years in Connecticut. From Connecticut we came to Whittier, California. My parents never departed.

Q. Did he have a church in Whittier?

A. He was pastor of the first Friends Church in Whittier, I think some six or seven years. This was the biggest Quaker church in the United States.

Q. Then, when you came to Whittier, your finances were probably a little better than they had been previously?

A. He finally ended up by making about $3,000. a year. Big deal. He didn't pay any income tax. He had too many children.

Q. How many children did your motherand father have?

A. They had seven, and one died almost at birth.

Q. What were their ages in relation to yours?

A. Well, I was the oldest, and the one who died - I don't know how old I was when she was born. But my next sister, Lorene, was three and a half years younger than I. Then my sister Olive was six years younger. Then my sister Norma was about nine years yoonger than I. I forgot my brother who was a year younger.

Q. What was his name?

A. Francis, the same as my father.

Q. That's only five so far, including you.

A. My youngest brother, John. I was fourteen when he was born.

Q. What was your relationship with your parents - were they loving, or were they too busy with all the children?

A. Oh no, they were fine. I don't know how they could stand us. We were terrible.

Q. Do you know - did you just come along, or was there any birth control arrangement?

A. I don't think they believed in birth control. It was just a matter of what happened, taking what came. It could be a turkey, or a piglet. But there was definitely a lot of love and affection in the family.

Q. What was your relationship to your younger brothers and sisters. Were you a second mother. Did you help around the house?

A. I helped around the house. But, when I look back, I think not nearly enough. My poor mother was stuck with most of the work. As far as the other children - we got along as well as any family of that size could in a house with one bathroom.
Q. Was there an arragements where everybody helped in the house? How was the setup? How did you live? Who cooked, etc.?
A. I'm afraid my poor mother cooked breakfast and so on. When I got old enough, I cookedmy own and went off to school. But I think she mainly cooked breakfastfor the younger children.
Q. And your father,didhe help at all around the house?
A. No.
Q. Was he a scholar?
A. He was a scholar - the scholarly type.
Q. Did he devote a lot of time to the church?
A. Yes,he was a full time minister.
Q. Do you think he devoted more time to the church than to the family?
A. Oh, I think it was about equally divided. He had to devote time to a family of our size, and he did.
Q. Did either of them have anything to do with your education?
A. Oh, yes.
Q. In what way?
A. Well, they forced me to go to college. I think there were only three of us who went to college. But the others didn't want to. They took jobs instead.
Q. Let's get back then to your school years. Where did you go to grammer school?
A. I went to the Lou Hoover grammar school in Whittier, California. This was only for two years, right after we came from Connecticut. Then I went to.
Q. What year was that?
A. 1918.
Q. This was during the war then.
A. The war was just ending.
Q. Well, Did the war affect your family in any way. Do you remember that?
A. Well, my father was just about to enlist as a pastor when the war ended. And I guess we were all very glad when it did end, for that reason at least. Because he would have gone.

He was very patriotic. He was a Minute Man. He wentto theatres and spoke to raise money, and that sort of thing.

Q. Did the children get involved?

A. Oh, we were very patriotic. We marched in all the parades. I don't know, we thought the war was just wonderful, I think.

Q. Well, what about school. How many kids went to the school?

A. We all wentthrough High school.

Q. I mean, how many children were in the Lou Hoover School?*

A. We were all in it except the youngest three who were too young to go to school at all.

Q. What I meant, was not your family, but how many children were in the same group with you?

A. I cn't remember. There were probably about thirty.

Q. Did you make any new friends?

A. Yes. I still have friends I made in school. One friend lives over in Berkeley, and I see her every once in a while.

Q. Were did you go to high school?

A. Whittier Union High School. I went there for four years, graduated, worked during the summer.

Q. Let's not go so fast. What kind of friends did you make?

A. I really didn't make any lasting friendships there.

Q. What were you interested in? Did you plan your furuture?

A. I was interested in sports.

Q. What was your social life like?

A. Just school parties, which they had occasionally. And Whittier, at that point (I haven't been there for a long time how) was rather a bigoted town. If you went to a dance you were considered to be very "fast". And there really wasn't too much activity around the school. There were parties, and there were teas to which you invited your friends. There were PTA meetings.

Q. Were your parents involved in these?

A. Oh yes, one of them, or both of them would go occasionally. My father wanted me to takeLatin. I absolutely refused. I took French instead.

Q. Were you a scholar in any way?

A. I was medium. I really wasn't interestedin being a big educationalbug.

- - - -

* Lou Hoover was Herbert Hoover's wife.

Q. Did you have any idea of what you wanted to be when you grew up?
A. I wanted to be a school teacher.
Q. Was that the only avenue opento you? Or did you really want to?
A. Well, there weren't too many avenues opento women in those days either. You became a secretary, or you became a teacher, and that was about it.
Q. Did you spend more time with your brothers and sisters, or with your friends?
A. I spent more time with my brother and sisters.
Q. What was your family's social life like?
A. I was like any other family's normal social life. For one thing, we had prayers every night. My father would read the bible then we would all kneel downand pray. It used to sort of embarrass me if I had friends there. One of my friends from then whom I saw a few weeks ago said, "Katherine, I admired you so much." She said,"When you had prayers you were louder than enybody else."
Q. Were you in any plays, or -
A. Oh yes, I was in all the plays. That was my main interest really. It was drama.
Q. So, tell me a little bit about it.
A. Well the school would put on plays, mainly in the auditorium. But sometimes they would put on plays and charge admission. I was in nearly everything.
Q. Did you take any interestin reading plays? Did it go deeper?
A. Oh, I loved to read. I read everything I could lay my hands on. There wasn't too much.
Q. Were you interested insocial problems at that time?
A. No. The only thing that made me vaguely aware of social problems was the minority problem. And it used to bother me that, even in the Quaker church where everyone is supposed to be equal, there weren't many Negroes in it. There was only lady from Jamaica. But she wasn't considered a Negro. She wasn't an American Negro. I remember her very distinctly.
Q. Why did it bother you?
A. Well, I thought there should have beenmore Negroes. There was, even at this point, quite a few in the town. So, what they did was set up a church on the other side of the town for the Negroes and the Japanese.

Q. Why do you think you thought that way when your parents didn't, and your social equals didn't?

A. Well, some of my school friends did. And I just didn't see what I could do about it anyway.

Q. Was it a religious conviction, or was it a social conviction?

A. It was a conviction of justice.

Q. What years did you go to college?

A. Let's see now - I went from 1925 to 1929.

Q. You worked in the summers?

A. I worked in the summers.

Q. What kind of work?

A. Office work. I had taken shorthand and typing in high school. I could go to Los Angeles and get a job. Which I did. They were crummy jobs, but -

Q. You worked your way through college, then?

A. They provided my room and board, because I lived at home.

Q. Did you pay your tuition?

A. In those days there was practically no tuition. You had to buy a book occasionally -

Q. So, you kept the money yourself, or did you pay any board and room at home?

A. I didn't pay anything. My parents were very generous.

Q. What did you do with the money you made then?

A. I bought a car for $75.00.

Q. Did that give you more freedom?

A. Oh yes. It was a model T Ford. It would go anywhere.

Q. Did your parents think that kind of freedom wasn't for a womanof your age?

A. They didn't say much about it. And my brother, who was a year younger than I, had a car. They didn't complain about anything except that there were always three cars in the driveway. You had to move and move and move, you know.

Q. What was college like in relation to sports and drama and reading & friends?

A. College at that point was more of a religious institution than it is now.

Q. What college did you go to?
A. Whittier. It was more of a religious institution. And religion you had to take. It was one of the main courses there.
Q. The Quaker religion, or justreligion?
A. Religion in general. Of course, I suppose it was tinted a little bit by Quakerism. After all, Whittier is a Quaker town. It was settled by Quakers and the Quakers still own most of it.
Q. What about drama. Were you still active?
A. Yes.
Q. andsports?
A. Yes.
Q. What kind of sports?
A. Oh, hockey and basketball mostly.
Q. I presume there were teams.
A. Yes,but they were teams mostly chosen on the spur of the moment. They weren't regular teams.
Q. What about your private life? When did you start going out with boys?
A. I started going out with boys when I was in high school.
Q. What kind of boys?
A. Well, almost any kind.
Q. Did your parents object.
A. No. I had one boy friend I was really mad about. He was kind of an artistic type. But they were strict with me. I had to be home at a certain time at night. I remember one night I came home, it must have been about 11:30, and my father was waiting up in his bathrobe. And he went out there and said to Ross, "What do you mean by bringing Katherine home at this hour?" Poor old Ross, I don't know, he was struck dumb. So, my father said, "I wouldlike to see you Ross at my office tomorrow" at a certain time. So Ross went. And he told me afterwards that my father was very nice, but he said he thought I was too young to be staying out that late. So, they evidently had a nice pleasant conversation.
Q. What did youdo for social life when you wentout with boys in those days?
A. You went to a movie. There was only one movie in Whittier

at that point. They didn't believe in movies. They only had one movie, and it was not openon Sundays. And for social life we would go to Norwalk or someplace like that and go to a movie there. There wasn't very much to do.

Q. Did people double date in those days?

A. A little bit, but I don't remember.

Q. Were there picnics and things like that?

A. Oh yes, there were always picnics. And we had parties at other people's houses. We would put on a record, and dance a little bit. That was our main social life.

Q. You were actually going to college during the depression. Did it affect you or your family in any way?

A. I don't think so, because my father was so underpaid anyway. It didn't really make very much difference.

Q. Being underpaid - did parishoners bring food like they did in some-

A. Oh, we were getting gifts. Every Christmas the parish would gettogether and give each child a gift. They were usually kind of crummy, but they were something, and we looked forward to it. See. during the depression I had already graduated fromcollege and was looking for a job. I couldn't get anything as a teacher. None of my friends who had teachers certificates could either.

Q. So, what did you do?

A. I got temporary jobs as a secretary. I did housework. I did just about everything I could find.

~~A.~~ Then I met the guy I was to marry.

Q. How did you meet him?

A. I ran into him accidentally. He was working for the Southern California Edison Company. I met him through another friend of mine. We started going together. Pretty soon we decided to get married.

Q. Was he a Quaker?

A. No. He wasn't anything. He was an agnostic.

Q. What did your parentsthink of your marriage to him?

A. They were very nice to him.

Q. Did you get married in the Quaker church?

A. No. We eloped to Los Vegas. Neither of us had any money. I think he had $60. and I had about $20. or so.

Q. What was his profession?

A. He was an electrician.
Q. Was he a union member?
A. There were no unions in L.A. at that time.
Q. What did you do, after you got married and with no money?
A. We just wandered around. It was in the summertime. We just wandered around, and camped out at night, on the ground. So we camped on the ground, and it finally got too much for me when I wokeup and a cow was about to stamp on my face. So, I said "This has got to go." So he was expecting some money from Whittier from the bank. So we were waiting around St. George, Utah. He was going to the post office every day to see if it had come. It just didn't show up. So one of the guys who worked in the post office said, "Where areyou staying"? And Don said "Any place we can." So they invited us to come and stay with them, and help them. They were Mormans.
Q. What did they do - did they have a ranch, or farm?
A. A Farm. They called them farms. Out here it would be a ranch. So, we went out there and stayed with them. They had several children, and they were really quite a nice couple. They were poor. But they raised stock. The main thing I didn't like about the place was the rattlesnakes.
Q. What did you two do there to help them?
A. Well, I helped take care of the kids if they wanted to go out and didn't take the children with them. And Don helped Bill around the farm, mending fences and just doing anything that had to be done around the farm, and I guess there was plenty. And then our money finally came, and we left. And we all cried. And we took a nice vacation. We went to Bryce Canyon, which is absolutely beautiful. And to Mt. Zion National Park. And then we went - where did we go then? I think we decided to come backto San Francisco where his mother was. So we came back to San Francisco, and his mother was there waiting for us with food and she was a wonderful cook.
Q. Did she have a home?
A. An apartment, on Fulton Street. That I remember. And so we just decided - well, she was living with a guy by the name of Bill Markham - and we decided to take a trip. No motels or anything like that. All four of us. We went in Don's car because it was the best car of the two. Bill had one but he left it

somewhere. And we had a good time. We fished for salmon on the Rogue River. We evidently had enough money to get by on. I don't know where it came from. We stayed in the Rogue River, and the salmon weren't running that year. We would dearly loved to have had a salmon for dinner, of course. So anyway we went on up through the Dallas and on to Portland. And I got a job there in a restaurant which was - it was nothing but a B girl place, and it didn't pay anything.

**

Side two of same tape - -

A. The job didn't pay anything;you were supposed to make up to the guys and that sort of business, so I quit. This was the berry season, and they were growing berries all over Oregon. So we went down to some little town not too far from Portland, I can't remember the name of it, and Don and I picked berries for a living. And it was awfully hard work, you know if you weren't used to bending and all that sort of business. And we went back to - we picked berries for several days and then there was a week end off or something, or we took it off, and we went back to Portland to see Don's mother.

Q. How much money did you make picking berries?

A. It was a piece work deal, and we got paid by how many baskets we picked. So we went back to his mother for a couple of days, and when we came back everything looked so funny. We asked what was the matter and they said, "we went on strike." And Don said, "Well, what happened in the strike?" And the guy said, "we went in and asked for a raise per basket, and the guy said 'no' so we just went back to work." That was my first experience with a strike.

Q. So you went back to work too, then?

A. Sure, we went back to work. We didn't know the difference.

Q. How long did you stay there picking berries?

A. I think we stayed until the berry season gave out. Then Don's mother and her boy friend went back to San Francisco. And we went to, I think it was the Dallas, and we got jobs in a fruit factory there. I was working on pears, and he was an electrician. He was making more money than I was. I was doing piece work. I got paid by so many pears. Someone said, "Why aren't you more careful about those pears?" I said,

"What difference does it make? I am paid by how many I turn out, and not how theylook. This was in 1932, I think.
Q. Anything else happen while you were there?
A. While we were in Oregon..really not too much. Oregon is really a pretty dull place. I think it still is.
Q. How long did you stay in the pear factory?
A. We stayed there about three or four months - as long as there were pears. Then they put on apples, and I wasn't doing so well on them. They were harder to work with,so I quit. Then we decided to come back down to San Francisco. We had just about enough money to get back down to where his mother and her boy friend were. So, we came on down and everyone was on welfare. And Don and I were on welfare. I was on welfare, but you had to work. They took me because I was a secretary, and a good one. But I couldn't work every day. They wouldn't let you. The work had to be divided.
Q. What kind of work did you do?
A. They sent me out of the relief office. They had a place where they did that kind of work. It was in an old school building.I think it was on Fillmore Street. So I worked there a couple of days a week. Then they found out that my husband was also on welfare and getting a couple of days work a month, so they had to take me off. It killed them because they said they couldn't get a decent secretary. Anyway, I used to have to report at the relief office. It was on Buchanan Street someplace. You know where that little park is over there. It was right around there somewhere. I had to report there every morning, and then they told me where to go. I could have told them where to go. So, one morning I got in there and they were all excited. Some of them looked kind of scared. And one of them said, "What's going on?" and they said, "They are here again." And he said, "Who?" "The Communists." Well, it was a Communist Committee headed by Jerry Freingold. They had come to protest the fact that some of their members were being refused welfare to which they were entitled. What happened after that, I don't know, because a lot went on behind locked doors. But they were almost terrified. I wasn't a communist then. So, that was really my first contact with the Communist Party. Then Don, on some job on which he was working, I think he was working down at the brewery at 16th and Folsom, ran into a Communist and the communist

got him interested in the party. He introduced him to Fritz. And through Fritz he got introduced to Walter Lambert. And then he introduced them all to me. They convinced me that things weren't right the way they were going. I think Don had already signed up for the party. Then I signed up.

Q. On what basis did they convince you?

A. It was not on a theoretical basis. It was on the basis of who was making all the money. I wasn't. And then I could see what was going on. The unemployment, and the apple boxes on every corner. And you had to put in an application in advance to get a corner. And it was obvious that there was something wrong. It was the sort of thing I had never run into before. So I decided if I could do anything about it, to do it. So I got into a unit. I think I was a unit secretary, or something like that.

Q. What is a unit?

A. Well,it was a small group of not more than 10 or 12 people. They kept them small so that people wouldn't find out about them so quickly.

Q. Why didn't theywant people to find out about them?

A. Well, they were not in very good standing at that point. You know, everyone was afraid of the word communist, or the word red, and things were coming to a boiling point, where people were being arrested for practically nothing. And the general strike was just in the offing.

Q. This was in 1933 or 34 then.

A. The general strike was in 1934, but things were boiling before that. But in 1933, I believe it was 1933, they got me to go to work in the communist party office as a secretary.

Q. They must have trusted you a great deal then. You were only in the party a short time when they asked you to do this?

A. That's right. But secretaries were very scarce. And Louise Todd liked me, I think. And she broke me in on everything I was supposed to do, which wasn't really too necessary because Sam Darcy would shout it at me. He's the one who first started calling me Kate.He said Katherine was too long, it had too many syllables in it.

Q. What did you do there?

A. Well,I got shouted at. I handled all the dues stamps for the whole district, California, Nevada, and I think there

was one other state involved, Arizona it might have been. So,I was district dues director. I was appoonted, I was not elected. Sam Darcy nevergot anyone elected. I was appointed, period. And that was it.

Q. He was what?

A. He was District Director. The district was comprised of California, Nevada, and probably Arizona.

Q. And what was Louise Todd?

A. Louise was everything. I couldn't tell you exactly what her position was. She was a district functionary, and she was a very important one.

Q. What specifically did you do besides get shouted at?

A. Well, the dues was kind of a complicated matter because this was at 37 Grove Street,and we didn't want the dues money to come directly to Grove Street,so we had stations. People sent the dues and the money and ordered the dues and that sort of thing. So one of my jobs was to go around to all these stations ever so often.

Q. What were these stations - private homes?

A. Private homes. Oh,there was a barber shop and places like that - places where people wouldn't ordinarily think of. One of them was a dentists office right down here on Mission Street. Lee would know that dentist, he used to go to him. Johnny knew him. So, I would have to check, and I couldn't use the phone. So I was running around. It seems to me that I was running around all the time. And then, when William Z.Foster was here, I was running up to his apartment all the time. I had to take him messages. He was sick. And see if there was anything he wanted, and this sort of business. I think I was kind of, to be trite, a girl friday.

Q. What did they pay you?

A. $10.00 a week. I think they raised to $12.50 before I left. I can't remember.

Q. And did you write leaflets, or mimeograph them?

A. I mimeographed them. But I didn't write them. Betty Gannet was there,and you couldn't write anything around Betty Gannet. She was in charge.

Q. She was another functionary?

A. Yes, she was, I don't think they even called her an agit-prop,which is what she was.
Q. What is an agit-prop?
A. Agent of agitation and propoganda.
Q. That was an 'in' term?
A. Yes.
Q. Then, when - why did Darcy shout at you?
A. Oh, it was his habit. He shouted at everybody. I wasn't singled out. It was just his way. And he would say -
Q. You said there were rich people involved?
A. Yes, there rich people in California who were very interested in the party, and seeing the party grow,and seeing that certain things were brought to the attention of the people. They were giving money every now and then.
Q. Did you have to do any of that collecting?
A. I didn't do any of that collecting, ut I knewwhen it was being collected. And one thing which was really wonderful and which I have always loved about George Anderson was the fact that he did all this work for the party and didn't collect one dime. He was the attorney that got Louise out of Tehachapi.
Q. Let's get back to you. We know how what you did as an office worker,but were you active in your unit? You said you were a secretary.What did the unit do? What did you do as an individual party member?
A. The unit was given instructions from the central office, as to what they were supposed to do. So our responsibility was to do what we were told, whether it was delivering leaflets, or whatever.
Q. What if you didn't agree with what you were told?
A. I agreed. Anyone who stayed in agreed.
Q. If you didn't agree, you just got out, in other words?
A. Well,this is what happened, but nobody seemed to get out.
Q.What specific things did you do? What about unemployment?
A. When we found out that something of that sort was going to happen,then we mobilized a whole group together, the people in the unit, or the people who lived close to the people who were being evicted, who were progressive. We didn't involve just communist party people. We involved people who lived

close and people who knew the people who were being evicted, for non payment of rent. They couldn't afford to pay rent. They didn't have jobs.

Q. Who evicted these people?

A. They had a group go in and take their furniture (It was the landlord who organized this group) out and put it on the sidewalk, and all their belongings. Do you remember Ruth and Jim Garrison? They had a little baby, threemonths old, or something like that. They evicted the whole thing. They took everything out and put it on the sidewalk. So, our group just went and sat there, and waited until the police came, and then we put every stick of furniture back in there. You see, they didn't give them notice, or anyting.

Q. So you made the police put the furniture back in?

A. Yes. Then we would have a group that (I think Don was a member of this group) went around and turned on the P G & E when it was turned off for non payment. We didn't pay ours. Here's what you had to do. You had to be kind of careful about it because if the PG&E came to check and found that it had been turned off , then you were in kind of trouble. So you were supposed to turn it on again every morning, and then at night you turned it off. One morning Don forgot. Nobody did anything about it. Almost everyone was in the same shape. People in St. Francis Wood were getting relief boxes. Everyone was flat.

Q. So even people who were not party members who were evicted, you put them back in too?

A. Yes.

Q. What about, if they were given eviction notices and moved out. Did you still put them back in?

A. Yes. You know who was chairman of that committee - Alex Noral. And - what was her name? Myrto used to call them Winken, Blinken and Nod.

Q. Say people were evicted. Did you wait for the sheriff's people to go away - and then move them in?

A. Well, what usually happened was that the sheriff's people would move them in again. It is against the law for people to live in the sidewalk. So, they had to put them somewhere, and I guess the jails were pretty crowded. I can't exactly remember what happened - how they got put back in again, but I

know they did. We won all those cases.

Q. That's one thing that you did. Now, there were unemployment demonstrations - or where there?

A. There were some unemployment demonstrations in front of the place where I was working - that welfare place. So, that's about all it amounted to.

Q. Were there problems with people not getting welfare?

A. Yes. We would send people in like we did before. Those horrible communists were here again.

Q. Was this more than communists?

A. Other people involved themselves. A lot of times it wasn't for a communist.

Q. Were there any other organizations besides the communists who were doing anything?

A. I can't recall that there was anyone else.

Q. It seems to me, I remember redding something about Unemployed Councils.

A. Well, this is the same thing. It was the Unemployed Council. It was Alex Noral that was the head of it.

Q. And they involved communists as well as other people?

A. That's right. They involved a lot of people that would never admit it now.

Q. Were there any parades at that time? Was your husband a union member since he was an electrician?

A. Yes, he was a union member all the time.

The communist party did not participate in Labor Day parades.

Q. Did they have parades of their own?

A. May Day. May Day was the anniversary of the horrible May day massacre in Chicago. So the communists recognized this and demonstrated for it. Labor Day, as far as they were concerned, was a real phony thing set up by Samuel Gompers. I was in a couple of them. In one of them I carried the red flag, right up Market Street, practically at the head of the parade.

Q. With the hammer and sickle on it, and everything?

A. Oh, yes. The works. This was 1933. I hope I'm getting my dates right.

Q. Did you do any picketing at all?

A. Well,there wasn't much picketing done in those days. Now I don't know why. I don't remember any particular picket lines.

For one thing, there was not very much organizing going on. So, where were you going to picket?

Q. I was thinking of picketing for other reasons. Like, during that period, I think there were things like the Harlan, Kentucky case, and the Scottsboro boys. There were all sorts of civil rights cases. Were you involved in them?

A. No, I don't remember anything. I think I would have known. It must have been Los Angeles then, earlier. Because there wasn't anything here as far as I know.

Q. Mass meetings or anything in support of these national setups?

A. I don't remember. I didn't go, and I would have gone if there had been.

Q. I guess we've got time to go a little bit into the 1934 strike. That's about the next big thing that must have happened in San Francisco. How did the strike affect you personally?

A. Well, I am trying to think how it affected me personally. I was still married to Don McKee, and we had just moved because the functionaries insisted we moved because they said the FBI and the immigration knew where I was living. SO I moved to a place on Grove Street. I don't know where it is now. And we moved all our things there, the typewriter and so forth, and the second day of the general strike, I wasn't even home. My sister, Lorene, was home. She and her husband were living with us. They had come up from Los Angeles.

Q. She knew you were a communist?

A. Oh, yes. She is a progressive girl. Not like me. In any case, Jack, her husband, went down to the communist party headquarters on Valencia Street. It is now a funeral home. And Don was home. And Lorene was home. And this group of vigilantes, which is all they were, came in, and they beat up on Dan. And here was Lorene beting on their chests. She said, "I am going to get my father on you." And they tore everything apart. You see, they thought I had party records, which I did have. But I hung them out of the window. They took all the beds apart and threw them on the floor, and took the dresser drawers out looking for records. And I had an old typewriter. It wasn't very good, but it was at least a typewriter. They took the keys and just bent them.

Q How many men were involved?
A. I don't know. I wasn't there. I stood - the hardest thing I ever did in my life was to stand outside and not go in. Because I knew what would happen if I went in. Because they knew who I was, and they would have picked me up too, and I couldn't afford to be pickedup.
Q. Did Don recover. Did they hurt him very badly?
A. No, just bruises. They had three guns there, and they took them. And they took him to jail and kept him there for two or three days enroute to Los Angeles. And he had a job when the strike started.
Q. Were the vigilantes partly policemen?
A. It was very hard to tell. You see, there was such a job. outside of the house when I got there I couldn't tell who was inside the house, and I didn't dare go in. So Don and my sister were the only ones there. And Jack came home, and by that time they were all gone.
Q. Did you try to get the house together again, or what happened?
A. I didn't go in the house that night. I went over and stayed at Don's mothers. She was running a beauty parlor on New Hampshire Street in the Potrero, and she had a room in the back. So we stayed there. I didn't want to go back. I was afraid they would have someone there waiting. So, we stayed there that night and the next morning we went over. And those damh fools, we had $60.00 there and they missed that. They weren't looking for that, but it would have been a bonus. Anyway, we picked things up, and moved everything out that belonged to us.
Q. Did you move someplace else then?
A. Yes. We couldn't go back there.
Q. You still continued to go to party headquarters and go to work?
A. There wasn't any party headquarters. They had torn up 37 Grove Street with great glee. And the place on Valencia Street where they threw the piano out of the window. I saw it. And so what we did,or what the party did, - Scott's family owned a very fancy restaurant it was up on Divisadero

Kate Rodin - Thursday April 15, 1976 - second tape

Q. At this restaurant, where did you meet - on the back?
A. No. It was closed down on account of the strike.The waiters and everybody except the family. And Norma Perry was always there because she was living with Arthur Scott at this point. And I was kind of a courier, you know, between the striking longshoremen and the Scott street place. I can't remember.how long we stayed in the Scott Street place. I think we stayed there until we bought 121 Haight Street.
Q. In what way were you a courier?
A. Well, I would get in touch with a party member who I knew was a party member and give him certain information which I felt that the leaders of the longshore strike needed. In that way I was a courier.
Q. Then the party was not so much underground as simply evading people who would try to arrest them?
A. That's right. They were trying to evade recognition as party members to the point that they would be, you know, arrested. They were arresting people simply on suspicion.
Q. Did they arrest anybody you knew?
A. What they did at that time was not so much - well they arrested a lot of people. I can't say how many they arrested. They arrested - well the news media was all messed up. I remember seeing one picture in the paper in 1934. Here was John Shoemaker, and here was a horse with a black eye, and the policeman who was riding it said "It was the cruelest thing I ever saw done." One of the interesting things I went through during the strike was the Communist Party sent around a soup kitchen every night with coffee and do nuts and everythihg to the pickets. I went around two or three times on that. Communist party or not, they were tickled to death.
Q. There wasn't this antagonism toward the communist party on the part of the longshoremen, then?
A. No. Then the battle of Rincon Hill came along, and they were shooting longshoremen, regardless of who they were.
Q. Would it be natural in San Francisco then for a lot of longshoremen to be party members because this was a basic industry?

A. Yes.
Q. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but were there a lot of longshoremen who were party members?
A. Yes, there were. The part I never could get over, and nobody else could either, was why Sam Darcy considered the Crystal Palace Market the main unit in San Francisco, and there downon the waterfront were all these longshoremen. And Darcy paid no attention to them. He really didn't.
Q. What was there about the Crystal Palace?
A. Well, he considered it - there was sort of a beef in the party at that time, I think, about how the party should be organized - whether it should be organized on the whole Crystal Palace or -
Q. You had better tell us what the Crystal Palace was.
A. You know the Crystal Palace was the biggest market in San Francisco. Probably the most popular. It had everything there from draft beer on up or on down. They were all in one place. It was run by concessionaires. And here were the longshoremen down there starving to death and being picked out of the line to work or not to work, and no one was paying any attentionto them. And really they did it on their own to begin with.
Q. And then you became interested?
A. He became interested.
Q. Can I ask you a question, and if it is out of line, just tell me. What about the National communist party?
A. Roy Hudson came out. He was one of the great lovers of our time. He was head of , what would I say, the industrial department of the C.P., or something. He came out here and we had a huge meeting at - oh what's that now - the ice skating - Winterland - they had a huge meeting - we used to have all of our big meetings - and Roy was there waving his arms around.
Q. Was this in the middle of the strike?
A. I think so.
Q. Did the police come to that meeting?
A. The police patrolled everything. They were always there. They never did what you wanted them to. There was no disruption. The meetings were always orderly. So, anyway, Roy

was the one representative we had here. I think William Z. Foster was still here,but he was too ill to do anything.
Q. So you were the courier - did you give party directives to these people, or just information, or what?
A. Oh, information, party directives, and that sort of thing - what was planned. And then I was always responsible for the money, which was a great chore.
Q. During all this time were you still not interested in theory - how much reading did you do?
A. I read everything I was supposed to, and I went to some classes. I remember (this was in Seattle) one class I went to on dialectical materialism, and I didn't understand a word of it.
Q. During the strike, was your husband harrassed in any way, outside of being beaten up? You said he was arrested.
A. Well,he couldn't get a job for a long time. Well, they kept him in jail for two or three days. They charged him with vagrancy. He didn't have a job then, because there was a general strike on, but he had a job when the strike started.
Q. Was the police activity more pronounded before the general strike, or during the general strike?
A. I know that the police activity was much less after the general strike. The policemen and the longshoremen got along fine. They respected each other.
Q. After the general strike?
A. Yes. But during the general strike, they called out the National Guard and that sort of business, so what can you expect.
Q. The national guard did the shooting, or was it the police?
A. I think they both were shooting. I think the national guard didn't want to shoot too much. I remember Don's father, he wouldn't even compare them with the boy scouts - he called them package shooters. He was a socialist. Don sort of had a socialistic bringing up. His father was in Coxy's army. I don't know very much what Coxy's army was.
Q. We have gotten to the point of what you did as a secretary in the party. What about the average party member in the unit. What did they do during the strike?
A. They were each given someone to get in touch with,but there were no meetings. And we were told what we could do and

so forth. There were no meetings. It was too dangerous. I went up to a place where Ida Rothstein and another comrade were staying, and I got there about five minutes after the police had been there and picked up Ida and her friend and put them in the brig. I missed it by just -

Q. They picked up known communists, in other words.

A. That's right.

Q. What did they do during the strike that made them so dangerous?

A. The Communists weren't dangerous at all. They thought they were.

Q. What did the individual communists do - what were their chores?

A. They would be contacted, and they would be told what they could do. I remember during the general strike - you know all the steps in San Francisco - I used to wear high heels all the time, so I was running up and down in bedroom slippers distributing leaflets so that I wouldn't make a lot of noise. We did this at night. There was very little done during the daytime because it was too conspicuous.

Q. What happened when the strike was over?

A. Well, things settled down, and we moved into headquarters at 121 Haight Street and picked up the pieces. As a matter of fact the party grew by leaps and bounds during that period. The general strike made a lot of people realize what was going on. Let's see - oh, the people were coming in in droves. Of course, and I hate to say this, it was the popular thing to do. Doctors, and the professional people were coming in. And this is when the whole Hollywood Ten thing started. I don't know whether they all became members, but they became supporters. I still functioned as a secretary. And also, at that point, I was trying to organize the office workers. It was the hardest work in the world to do. But what we were trying to do, our main job was to get an office workers union, which we never did really. There is an office workers union here finally now which we started through our efforts.

Q. How did you go about doing this?

A. Some of us knew some people that worked in the banks. For instance, I knew a girl who worked in the Bank of America.

Every morning we distributed leaflets. But most of the people we distributed leaflets to who showed any signes of interest got fired. So we really didn't get anywhere. But we finally did get an office workers union. First they were independent. A small union. I was in all of them..Seattle, Portland, San Francisco. Now they are in the AFL-CIO. We went through about five other unions.

Q. In San Francisco, it didn't get off the ground?

A. No,not at that point. It was too dangerous.

Q. Let's get back- around 1934 and 1935 there was this question of Criminal Syndicalism.

A. Yes, that was Caroline Decker in Sacramento.

Q. What was it?

A. Damned if I know - there were five or six of them, involved in the criminal syndicalism case, and it was conspiracy, but what the conspiracy was I don't know, and I didn't know at the time. I didn't understand it.

Q. You said you were collecting signatures?

A. Yes, we were collecting signatures to put Anita Whitney on the ballot to run for governor. You have to have a certain number of signatures to qualify in California. It is a State Law. So, we were all going around collecting signatures to go to the City Hall, and you had to be a citizen. For instance,I was taking signatures there to be certified. I was a citizen. And then what happened was that they checked. So they would go up to the park or whatever - "was that a woman that collected your signature?" "No,it was a man." So they know damn good and well I didn't collect it. So this is the same thing they got Louise on... for pretending to have collected certain signatures she didn't collect. And Anita did the same thing, but they let Anita off because of her age. But they sure stuck Louise, and I could have been stuck for exactly the same thing, because I did the same thing.

Q. Probably everybody did, but they just got the ones they wanted to get.

A. They got the important ones. Louise went to jail.

Q. What kind of a social life did you have?

Accchccmecmentctocertiesc

A. Oh, we went to parties after all our acitivities were over. They were almost always left wing. We never went to right wing affairs or anything like that. Except, once in awhile, Darcy would tell me to go and find out what it was all about,so I would go. We went to a couple of pretty horrible affairs. But we would invite people over and drink a gallon of wine - cheap wine.

Q. What kind of parties- were they money raising affairs?

A. Some of them were, and some were just social, talk, talk, talk. We had fun. You can have fun when you are young.

Q. Did you go out on the town at all?

A. Yes, once in a while we did. Not often, because we couldn't afford it. We went to North Beach mainly. That was about the only place to go to have any fun. And we would go to a bar, or (let's see where did we used to go the most) Oh there was always someplace to go that was your favorite place in North Beach. We were living on California Street then, or Sacramento. There was a cable car. All you had to do was get on the cable car and you were in North Beach. We usedto go to Ritchie's at Powell and Vallejo. And we'd eat dinner at all the cheap restaurants, which were a helluva lot better than the expensiverestaurants now. So that was about our social life. Then we were invited out a lot to parties. All cheap stuff,but we had a good time.

Q. But you broke up with your husband finally. Why was that?

A. Well, he was always sort of taken by other women. I don't know how much he did, or anything like that. But I got kind of tired of it, and he was always leaving me. He'd get mad at me. He didn't believe me. I'd say I went to a meeting, and he didn't believe it. So he'd pack up his clothes, get in the car and go. He did this about a dozen times, and finally the last time I kicked him out.

Q. Then you were alone.

A. For about a year.

Q. Did you goout with other men during that period?

A. Oh, sure.

Q. Then what happened?

A. I went to Seattle. I had been involved with Sam before

Seattle. So he wanted me to come up there. So I did. He went first. Sam Telford.

Q. What did he do for a living?

A. He went to Seattle because he could ship out there through the National Maritime Union. I got a job myself.

KATE RODIN - second interview 4/23/76

Well, I went to Seattle and got a job with the International Woodworkers of America through Henry Glickson, who was director of industrial activities in theCommunist Party, in the Northwest. In Seattle the Spanish War didn't seemto be the issue that it was in San Francisco. There were comrades who were in Spain, fighting there, but not too many. On scrap iron to Japan, I don't remember Seattle being involved in that at all. I don't think they were shipping it from Seattle. I think they were shipping it from San Francisco. On political united front activities, I don't remember.

Q. Did you rejoin the party when you went to Seattle?

A. I didn't rejoins. I just transferred.

Q. What did you do there in the party?

A. I went to meetings, distributed leaflets, and was quite active in the Office Workers Union. And we had some difficult times in that Office Workers Union. You would think there were 1000 people in it, but I think there must have been about 45 or 50. I think we were split about five ways.

The party changed its position when we switched to supporting the Soviet Union. You see, it was a very difficult period when the Soviet Union signed this non-aggression pact. So the party told us/we should go for it. So we did. And I remember getting up at the union and trying to explain why the Soviet Union should sign such a pact.

Q. This was in 1941, wasn't it?

A. Yes. And it was quite difficult. The most difficult people in the office workers union at that point were the insurance men. Anyway, the split continued. I remember one meeting we had Woodie Guthrie came and spoke for nothing - sang for nothing rather. And this was before he became so popular. He was very popular during the war period, and went into a decline afterwards. Now he is very popular again. So the office workers activities were my main outside activities. I didn't do directly anything in the IWA? I wouldn't have dared to because the guys in there would have frowned on it. I wasn't supposed to. I was an office worker.

Q. Were you an official in the Party in Seattle?

A. I was a unit organizer and I finally became a member of the District committee.

Q. What did you do as a member of the district committee of the northwest?

A. Nothing except go to meetings.

Q. Did you determine policy?

A. Well, I suppose in a way we did. I can't remember determining any policy. Whatever it was, it was wrong.

Q. What did you do in the Woodworkers Union?

Q. Did they know you were a communist when you went to work there?

A. Glickson knew I was. Prichett knew I was. And that idiot McCarty, he didn't know his ass from a hole in the ground, was secretary. He wasn't a bad guy.

Q. What did your job entail?

A. I wrote letters, ran errands.

Q. Did you take more responsibilities on? I know you are much more able than that.

A. I was mainly a secretary in the IWA. I would go to Portland, or anywhere they were having district committee meetings, and take minutes and type them up, and go to conventions.

Q. Some of these men didn't have too much schooling. What about when they made speeches, or had to outline policy, did you help them?

A. I wrote McCarty's speeches all the time. I went along with the policy of the organization and made it as left wing as possible, and he gave the speeches over the radio.

Q. He didn't know the difference? What kind of a union was it basically. I know they must have had a Wobbly background as the International Workers of the World was in the logging industry.

A. Well, they didn't have the shingle workers so much except in the Canadian section. They had the loggers and they had the plywood workers, and they had, to some extent, the shingle mills. As I mentioned before, it was the loggers who were the progressive ones. And the loggers were too damh Paul Bunyon to do anything about it. They would just sit there and discuss what was wrong with it, and then stay home.

Q. Where?

A. In the Burnside Executive Board. That was a bar in Portland on the East Side. So many of the loggers went there they called it the Burnside Executive Board. And they would

all congregate in there and emasculate the IWA, and they would cheerfully go home and go to bed and ignore the meetings. They were all good guys.

Q. Were there any communists in the IWA that were trying to do things?

A. Oh, yes. There were communists in the IWA, especially in the Northern section, which used to be called the Northern Washington District Council. That is where the split started. There was the Northern Washington District Council, which was mainly left wing; and there was the Columbia River District Council, which was right wing. And there was a continuous struggle going on there, and some stuff that never should have been brought out. Anyway, in the long run as far as the elections were concerned at the conventions, etc. the Northern Washington District was defeated. First there was one right wing character from the Columbia River District elected, Bert Lawry, and he was really quite a good guy. He was a marvelous organizer. It sort of went like that, and finally he pulled enough influence so that the whole central organization of the IWA was moved to Portland.

Q. How did WWII affect you when it broke out in December?

A. Well, it didn't have any immediate affect.

Q. Was your husband shipping out then?

A. Not yet, but practically immediately thereafter. So, when I was in Portland he was shipping out all the time.

Q. Did you move to Portland then?

A. Yes,

Q. What did you do in Portland?

A. The same thing. They asked me to go. I think they knew I was a communist, but they asked me to go anyway.

Q. Your husband went with you?

A. He was in Portland only a few weeks, after which he shipped out. He had to go to San Francisco to ship out. So anyway he shipped out and was gone for about six months. I stayed in Portland, andfinally things became kind of rough in Portland. They were accusing me of being a communist and so forth and so on,so I quit, and came back down here to San Francisco. I transferred to the communist party down here.

First I went to work at the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union, Local 6, but only for a few months. Then I went to work for the State Congress of Industrial Organization Council. Mervyn Rathborne was then head of the Council. And my main activity outside of the office was trying to organize the Office WorkersUnion. I would get up at six o'clock in the morning and go down and distribute leaflets to all the banks. We didn't get anywhere.

Q. We just wanted to get to the war on this tape,so why don't we go back and find out a couple of other things. As a woman in the Communist Party what was the policy in relation of men to women, or was there a policy?

A. I don't think there was any policy.

Q. Were you treated differently as a woman than you were outside of the party?

A. Well, we were ignored as much as possible except when they needed us. Oh, I was busy doing things all the time, but they were things especially important.

Q. Were there important women in the party?

A. Oh yes, Louise Todd, Oleta Yates,and Betty Gannet, but she wasn't really a west coast product. She was from the East. And she was sent out here to sort of take charge. Well, Glickson was a very good friend of mine. When I was in Seattle he was there too,and he was living with Mr. and Mrs.Rappaport who were the - Rappaport was the district organizer up there. I think he is in Sonoma laying eggs now, or somewhere around. Anyway, Glickson had quite a sense of humor in his way. Someone one asked him one time what was his position on women in the party, and he said "horizontal." It was a typical Glicksonism. And everyone knows of the one where he sent in an expense account and one of the items was "man is not made of wood - $2.00". Anyway, I don't know how Rappaport left. I think he finally got fired. Glickson came down here to San Francisco and got into the Warehouse Union.

Q. We were talking about the party policy, I am assuming that they thought everyone was a worker in the vineyards so to speak,but what about your relationship to men in the union?

A. Well, sad to say there were very few men in the office workers union. And also very few women

Q. What about when you were working with the IWA then, was there any feeling of difference?

A. Well, I didn't notice it at the time.

Q. Let's get your opinion on the other women you knew in the party. What about Oleta Yates. I know that you knew her quite well.

A. Yes, I did. I remember my first meeting with her. Sam Darcy had decided on a hairbrained scheme that Don and I should go down to Taft. Don's father was an oil worker and had been an oil worker for many many years down there. And that we should try to do some work among the oil workers, who were completely untouched. So he sent Jim Branch with us. He was a very smart guy, thoroughly founded in the principles of Marxism. So he decided Branch should go with us. So we routed Jim Branch out of bed. He was lazy as hell. You could never get him to go anywhere. If he was to speak at a meeting anywhere someone was assigned to go and wake him up. So we went down to Taft and stayed there. And it was hot. I'll never forget how hot it was. And Don's father and Don took him around and introduced him to some oil workers. Strangely enough Oleta was due to speak at their open air park that night. I had never heard of her. I don't think that anyone elsehad either. She was speaking for the Socialist Party. I didn't know then that she was a communist and was still in the socialist party. So anyway she gave a talk, and I think I went up and shook hands with her and told her I enjoyed the talk. I never saw her again until the communist party office. ThenI found out what she was doing, working within the socialist party to recruit communists. So she and I were very friendly. Then, well at that point I was married to Sam. He was a very good friend of Yates. They shipped out together and all this kind of thing. Sam used to take dare of him when he was sick. He was a real Japanophile ~~a~~ crazy about Japanese women. And we invited them for dinner several times. We saw them together, and they finally got married. We were the first ones they told.

Q. What do you thinkof Oleta. In retrospect, what do you

think of her as a woman and as a leader in the communist party.
A. I think she was really outstanding. She was articulate, she was a marvelous teacher. She was having a rough time in a lot of ways. She was an attractive woman and a lot of guys were after her. But she was really A-1 in every respect.
Q. Did you know Anita Whitney?
A. Yes,
Q. Did you have any experiences with Anita at meetings or parties or such?
A. No. Not too many experiences. I have been in her home, and she and I rode in the same car down to Fresno to a party convention one time. It was her car, of course. And Lawrence Ross was driving. He was a horrible driver, and I knew darn good and well we were going to get wrecked. I was very fond of Anita, but Anita was getting on in age. She wasn't the party leader she used to be. She was more of a symbol. Then she got all mixed up in the case Louise was, and they finally decided they were not going to imprison her, that she was too old. And she had no relatives she would have anything to do with except one greusome nephew. I can't remember what his name was. I saw him over at your house one time. He came with Anita. You had some kind of a do for Anita.
Q. For goodness sake. I'm taping you and I don't even remember that.
A. I do. Sam and I were there. Anita then just sort of faded into the background. She wasn't well enough to do anything, but she still remained a great party symbol.
Q. You said you knew a woman named Myrto.
A. Myrto was really the first woman I ever knew in the party. She came from Carmel. Before that she was evidently one of a brood of quite a few children. And her father was an itinerant minister. He used to go and set up his tent and deliver his ramblings. And everyone said he looked like Abraham Lincoln, so they started calling him Abraham Lincoln's child. That is how Myrto picked her name - Myrto Child. Her real name was Sawvelle, Dorothy Sawvelle. Hal Sawvelle was a seaman poet, and I think that's where she got a lot of her songs. She knew all the songs. She knew

Dr. Freud and all those. Old sea chanteys.

Q. Do you have any of those around?

A. They all got thrown out when I was in the hospital.

Q. Was she active as a member of the party too.

A. Yes. She was the bohemian type. She lived in Carmel first. Then she moved over to North Beach. She was pretty bohemian at that point. I have only seen her a few times during the last fifteen years. She came over to seeus. I was at a meeting and wasn't home, but Sam was. She was a marvelous cook. She was working as a housekeeper at this point for some wealthy people down in Hillsborough. Why she quit the job, I don't know. And she started her own restaurant down on Old Bayshore. So Sam and I were going down to Boulder Creek one day and we decided that we would stop at Myrto's and have dinner on the way back. So we stopped, but there was nothing there. She had evidently gone broke in about two weeks.

Q. Are there any other particular experiences that you had that you would like to talk about - Oh, I forgot, you were going to tell me about Norma Perry.

A. Well, I don't Know too much about Norma Perry except I was with her at this restaurant, where we were when the communist headquarters were broken up.

Q. And was a member of the communist party?

A. Yes, and she was down there at Harry Bridges' outfit all the time. She told me one time, she said, "now, Kate you shouldn't wear your skirts so short with all these men around."

Q. She had quite a reputation, didn't she, as a woman about town. Did she get that afterward?

A. She had it all the time.

Q. What did she do? As I heard it, she was a behind-the-scenes - the power behind the trhone in the Sailors Union of the Pacffic. Is this true?

A. Well, this was after the Harry Bridges Episode.

Q. What was the Harry Bridges episode?

A. When she was working with the ILWU during the strike. She was sort of a secretary. Heaven knows what she was. I don't know.

Q. How did she get acquainted with Harry Lundberg?

A. Through Harry Bridges. Lundberg wasn't quite as reacti nary then as he turned out to be. He was a party member at one time. So Norma just moved in. She figured there was more to be gotten there than out of the ILWU outfit. And she evidently had a great influence over Lundberg.

Q. Did she work in the union office?

A. Yes, for a while. She mimeographed and did that sort of thing. I don't know what happened then because nobody was close to the situation then.

Q. Did she leave the communist party?

A. Oh yes. Or they left her, I don't know which. They used to call her the iron cunt of the waterfront. I know my husband used to say as many penuses stuck in her she would like like a porcupine..

Q. You mean as many stuck out as had been stuck in - yes.

A. Anyway, people lost track because there wasn't anyone progressive in the SUP except Al Quittenton, and they threw him out. They threw Sam out.

Q. Can you think of amything else you would like to say.

A. Well, there was a little bit of humor in the party sometimes. There was a Mrs. Pappan. She had a family of I don't know how many children, and a husband, but nobody ever heard of him. She talked all the time, and you couldn't hear anyone but her. She was an ardent pusher of the Western Worker. She always went around with a shopping bag full of Western Workers and accosted everyone on the street and tried to sell them one, and everybody on the buses or anything like that, she would try to sell them a Western Worker. So Sam Darcy tells the story, he had a Western Worker in his pocket, and you could see what it was. So he got on the street car, and the conductor said, "Oh, she got you too. huh."

Q. There were a lot of devoted people in the party then?

A. Mrs. Pappan got back to Russia some way or other. I don't know how. She kept talking about going back all the time.

Q. I guess that's it then. We could go onto the rest of your life, but guess we have to stop with the war. That stopped a lot of things. OK, Kate, thanks.

INDEX

KATHERINE RODIN ORAL HISTORY

Bridges, Harry	32,33
Communist Party	12,14,20,22,24,30,33
Crystal Palace Market	20
Darcy, Sam	12,14,20,24,30,33
Depression (1920's - 1930's)	8
Federal Bureau of Investigation	17
Foster, Wm. Z.	13,21
Gannett, Betty	13,29
Glicksohn, Harry	26,30
Hudson, Roy	20
Immigration	1
International Woodworkers of America	26-28
Lundberg, Harry	32,33
May Day	16
Minorities	5
National Guard	21
Nazi-Soviet non aggression pact	26
Office Workers Union	22, 26

Perry, Norma 19,32

Police Department, San Francisco 21

Quakers 2,5,7

Race Discrimination 5

Rodin, Katherine
- Childhood 1-5
- College, family life 6,7,8
- Marriage 8
- Working on farm 9
- Return to San Francisco 9
- Going to Oregon 10
- Miscellaneous jobs 10
- Return to San Francisco 11
- Goes on Welfare 11
- Joins Communist Party 12,13
- Works for Communist Party 12,13
- Working with Unemployed 14-16
- Activity during West Coast Maritime Strike 17-22

Helping organize office workers 22
- Collecting signatures to put Communist Party on ballot 25
- Break up of marriage 25
- Goes to Seattle - joins Sam Telford 26
- Works for International Woodworkers of America 26-28
- Active in Office Workers Union 26
- Member District Committee Communist Party 27
- Goes to Portland 28
- Return to San Francisco 29
- Helps organize office workers 29,30
- Women she knew 30-33

San Francisco General Strike 17

Strikes 10,17

Todd, Louise 13,14,23,29

Unemployment and Unemployed Councils 14,15,16

Vigilantes 17,18

Women
- Birth control 2
- In Communist Party 29

Whitney, Anita	23,31
World War I	3,4
Yates, Oleta O'Connor	29-31